

Additional Resources for Teachers

This list of resources is not related to any specific lesson plans. It is meant as a guide to help teachers discover more ways to teach about Buddhist traditions. The DIA does not endorse any of these materials or organizations. They are provided for reference only.

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Kid-friendly Feature Films and Documentaries

- *The Buddha*, PBS documentary narrated by Richard Gere
https://youtu.be/Vc7_VyVXDLs
- *Seven Wonders of the Buddhist World*, PBS Documentary
<https://pbsinternational.org/programs/seven-wonders-of-the-buddhist-world/>
- *Buddha: The Great Departure (Part I)*, 2011. Anime
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1686865/>
- *Buddha 2: The Endless Journey*, 2014. Anime <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2936864/>
- *The Cup*, 1999, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0201840/>
- *Happiness*, 2013 <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3458776/>
- *The Next Guardian* <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/thenextguardian>
- *Supermonk*, 2018. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9668540/>
- *Becoming Who I Was* <https://www.cargofilm-releasing.com/films/becoming-who-i-was/>
- *Tashi and the Monk* <http://tashiandthemonk.com/>
- *The Children of the Buddha* <https://dharma-documentaries.net/the-children-of-the-buddha>
- *Buddhism, Bhutan and Me* <https://dptv.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/fbk21-buddhism-bhutan-and-me/buddhism-bhutan-and-me-films-by-kids-video/>

Children's Books about Buddhism

- *Ashoka the Fierce* <https://www.shambhala.com/ashoka-the-fierce.html>
- *Buddhist Stories for Kids* <https://www.shambhala.com/buddhist-stories-for-kids.html>
- *Everything Changes and that's OK* <https://www.shambhala.com/browse-categories/everything-changes.html>
- *Everything Is Connected* <https://www.shambhala.com/everything-is-connected.html>
- *Just a Thought* <https://www.shambhala.com/just-a-thought.html>
- *The Magical Life of the Lotus-Born* <https://www.shambhala.com/magical-life-of-the-lotus-born.html>



- *Zen for Kids* <https://www.shambhala.com/browse-categories/zen-for-kids.html>
- *Bodhi Sees the World: Thailand* <https://www.shambhala.com/browse-categories/bodhi-sees-the-world-thailand.html>
- *The Story of Mu* <https://wisdomexperience.org/product/story-mu/>
- *Shantideva How to Wake UP a Hero* <https://wisdomexperience.org/product/shantideva/>
- *Religion around the World: A Curious Kid's Guide to the World's Great Faiths*

Reference books:

- *A Dictionary of Buddhism, Damien Keown*, OUP
- *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*

Introduction to Buddhism books (for teachers)

- *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, Damien Keown

Buddhist Festivals and Holidays

The major Buddhist holidays observed across the world are primarily celebrations of events in the life of the Buddha: his birth, enlightenment, teaching, and death. Marking the new year is another important holiday for Buddhists. Short summaries of these holidays and festivals are listed below. Please note that this list is not exhaustive; there are many more festivals and holidays than are included here!

A note about the dates of Buddhist festivals and the lunar and solar calendars

Most Buddhist festivals are based on a lunar or other non-Gregorian calendar, so the dates of events may change from year to year. If you are not sure what date a holiday will fall on, consider contacting a local Buddhist temple or center to find out!

How are Buddhist holidays and festivals celebrated?

There are many ways to celebrate Buddhist holidays. In many traditions, the karma or merit generated during holidays is thought to be greater than on other non-holy days. Buddhists may make an extra effort on special dates to engage in or refrain from certain activities. For example, monastic and lay Buddhists may temporarily keep vows, like refraining from eating meat. Another common practice is making donations to Buddhist monasteries, temples, and monks and nuns. People donate things like money, food, flowers, incense, lamps, and candles. Monks and nuns are often given a new set of monastic robes. People may travel to visit monasteries, temples, shrines, or other sacred places of pilgrimage. They may help clean or decorate temples, or clean and decorate Buddhist statues inside the temples. One common practice during the new year is to bathe or clean statues of the Buddha. Important dates are often celebrated with a parade

or procession, sometimes with elaborate floats and displays depicting scenes from the Buddha's life and past lives. All manner of light-generating activities are popular, including paper lanterns (to either float in the water or in the air), candles, lamps, fireworks, and electrical light displays.

Classroom activities for Buddhist holidays:

There are a range of secular activities you can do with students to celebrate Buddhist holidays: Make a paper lantern (to float on water, float away in the air, or to hang up); water or plant a tree; create a stained glass-style image from colored tissue paper to hang in the window; create a picture on a Lite-Brite or other backlit toy; hang a string of lights; share a special food or snack; create or color a Buddhist flag; create or hang prayer flags; have a mini parade around your classroom; read jataka stories; or draw or color pictures of the twelve animals associated with the twelve months of the lunar calendar.

New Year: Solar and Lunar New Year's Celebrations

New Year's celebrations in Asia are not necessarily exclusively or primarily Buddhist. But Buddhists often mark the New Year in distinct ways.

- Chinese New Year: Chinese New Year usually occurs in January or early February and lasts fifteen days.
- Korean New Year, Seollal: Seollal is not specifically a Buddhist New Year's celebration. It is typically observed in January or February on the second new moon after the winter solstice and lasts for three days.
- Japanese New Year, Omisoka: Japan celebrates the solar new year on December 31st according to the Gregorian calendar. Although Japanese New Year is not explicitly Buddhist, many mark the holiday by visiting a Buddhist temple or Shinto shrine on the first, second, or third day of the new year. This is called hatsumode, or the first visit of the year.
- Mongolian New Year, Tsagaan Sar: Tsagaan Sar means "White Moon" and is celebrated on the first through third days of the first lunar month, at the same time as Tibetan New Year.
- Tibetan New Year, Losar: Losar is on a different date each year because it follows the Tibetan lunar calendar. It usually falls in February or early March.
- Nepalese New Year, Swanti: Swanti is a five-day festival celebrated by the Buddhist and Hindu Newar communities in Nepal. The dates change each year based on the lunar calendar, but it usually falls in October.
- Indian New Year: There are many different New Year's celebrations in India based on the solar and lunar calendars. Many Buddhists in parts of India like Ladakh and Sikkim celebrate the New Year based on the Tibetan calendar.

- Thai New Year, Songkran: Songkran is on April 9 every year, but the holiday period extends from April 14–15.
- Myanmar New Year, Thingyan: Thingyan is a Buddhist festival celebrated over a period of four to five days culminating in the New Year, which usually falls in mid-April.
- Cambodian New Year, Choul Chnam Thmey, Moha Sangkranta, or Sangkranta: Sangkranta is the traditional celebration of the solar new year in Cambodia. It is a three-day holiday usually observed in mid-April.
- Lao New Year, Pi Mai: Pi Mai is a three-day festival celebrated in mid-April.
- Sri Lankan New Year, Aluth Avurudda: Sri Lanka celebrates the Sinhala and Tamil New Years. The Sinhala Buddhist New Year is generally celebrated on April 13 or 14 and traditionally begins at the sighting of the new moon.

Lantern Festival, Festival of Lights, and other Lunar Festivals

This festival is marked by lighting lamps and lanterns on the night of the full moon. It may be observed every month on the full moon, but certain special full moon celebrations are marked once a year. There are many festivals marking the full moon that have Buddhist origins, but not all moon festivals are Buddhist. In addition to lighting lamps and lanterns, some people fashion boats or other vessels to hold a light and set it afloat on the water. Full moon festivals go by many different names.

- In China, Shangyuan Festival or Lantern Festival takes place on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month.
- In Thailand, Loy Krathong takes place on the full moon of the twelfth month of the Thai lunar calendar.
- In Myanmar, it is called Tazaungdaing Festival or Festival of Lights.
- In Cambodia, Bon Om Touk or Boat Racing Festival is celebrated on a full moon day in late October or early November.
- In Laos, That Luang is held for three days during the full moon of the last lunar month (usually November).
- In Vietnam, Tet Trung Thu is held on the full moon of the eighth lunar month.
- In Sri Lanka, each full moon day or Poya is celebrated, but the Binara Full Moon Poya Day and Vap Full Moon Poya Day occur in the autumn and mark events in the life of the Buddha.

The Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment, and Death

In many South and Southeast Asian cultures, the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death are all celebrated at the same time. Buddhism follows the lunar calendar, so the exact date varies from year to year, but usually falls in April, May, or June (on the full moon of the lunar month called Vesakha). In East Asia, the Buddha's birthday, enlightenment, and death are typically observed

on different dates. Sometimes the entire month of the Buddha's birth is celebrated, as in the Tibetan month of Saga Dawa. These holidays have various names including Vesak, Wesak, Buddha Jayanti, Buddha Purnima, Buddha Day, Saka Dawa. Some of these are listed below:

- Korea, Seokga tansinil, Bucheonim osin nal: In Korea, the Buddha's birthday is a public holiday marked according to the lunar calendar, usually in May. In Seoul, the Buddha's birthday is also celebrated by a lotus lantern parade called Yeon deung hoe.
- Japan: The Buddha's birthday in Japan is called Kambutsu-e or Hanamatsuri, the "flower festival," and is observed on April 8th each year.
- Tibet, Saga Dawa: The Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death are celebrated during Saga Dawa, the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar, usually May or June.
- Bhutan, Saga Dawa: In Bhutan, the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death are marked during the month of Saga Dawa.
- Nepal, Buddha Jayanti: This festival marks the Buddha's birth, and is particularly celebrated in Lumbini, Nepal, where the Buddha is thought to have been born.
- India, Buddha Purinama, Buddha Jayanti
- Bangladesh, Buddha Purinama: In Bangladesh, Buddha Purinama is celebrated by lights, parades, and decorating temples.
- Myanmar, Kason: In Myanmar the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death are held during Kason, the second month of the Burmese calendar. The holiday is marked by a traditional festival called Nyaungye-thun or "Bodhi tree water pouring festival," when many visit Buddhist monasteries and temples to pour water onto certain trees.
- Laos, Vixakha Bouxa: Vixakha Bouxa commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha. It is held around May, based on the lunar calendar.
- Sri Lanka, Vesak: Sri Lanka has a unique way of celebrating Vesak by creating scenes from the Buddha's past lives, the jatakas, out of electric lights. These light displays are called pandals or thoranas.

Other festivals or holidays

The Rains Retreat or Monsoon Season, Vassa

- The Buddha spent much of his life traveling with his community of students and followers. Initially they lived outdoors, often staying in forests and traveling to nearby villages to beg for alms (donations of food). As the community grew, it established permanent structures where Buddhists could stay, particularly during the rainy monsoon season. Eventually, this seasonal pattern of staying in one place during the monsoon became known as the "rains retreat." Called Vassa, it usually lasts for three months during the rainy monsoon season. In places like Tibet, which do not experience an annual monsoon, Buddhists often still observe an annual three-month retreat.

Monlam Chemo, Great Prayer Festival

- Tibetan Buddhists celebrate Monlam Chenmo, or the Great Prayer Festival, which marks the Buddha's enlightenment. It is based on the lunar calendar and usually falls in February or March.

Dharma Day, Dhammachakka Day, Asalha Puja Day, Chokhor Duchen, Turning the Wheel Day

- Dharmachakra Day marks the Buddha's first teaching, the "first turning of the wheel." In Southeast Asia, it's called Asalha Day and is celebrated by Theravada Buddhists in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Myanmar, where it usually occurs in July. In Tibet, it's called Chokhor Duchen, and is usually celebrated in July or August.

Sangha Day, Magha Puja Day, Fourfold Assembly Day

- Sangha Day is a special day for Theravada Buddhists in Southeast Asia. It celebrates the Sangha or Fourfold Assembly—the Buddhist community of ordained monks and nuns. It usually occurs in February or March, based on the lunar calendar. It is marked by donations to monasteries and temples, lighting candles, and processions.

Buddhist institutions and cultural organizations in Detroit and Southeast Michigan

Buddhist Organizations

[Ann Arbor Karma Thegsum Choling](#) (Karma Kagyu tradition, Tibetan Buddhism)

[Ann Arbor Mindfulness Community](#) (Plum Village/Thich Nhat Hanh tradition, Thai)

[Buddhist Meditation Center or Wat Paknam](#) (Theravada tradition, Thai)

[Buddhist Temple of Toledo](#) (Soto Zen, Rinzai Koan)

[Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation](#) (Tzu Chi org, Taiwan)

[Chùa Tinh Tâm Vietnamese Buddhism Association](#) (Vietnamese Buddhism)

[Detroit Buddhist Center](#) (Soka Gakkai International-USA)

[Detroit Zen Center](#) (Jogye Zen Korean tradition, secular)

[Dhammasala Forest Monastery](#) (Theravada, Thai forest tradition, Thai)

[Dharma Gate Zen](#) (Zen, Korean-inspired tradition)

[Field Temple](#) (Korean Zen tradition)

[Great Lakes Buddhist Vihara](#) (Theravada tradition, Sri Lanka)

[Huron River Sangha in Ann Arbor](#) (Plum Village/Thich Nhat Hanh tradition, Thai)

[Jewel Heart](#) (Geluk tradition, Tibetan Buddhism)

[Jissoji Zen Ann Arbor](#) (Japanese Soto Zen tradition, Japan)

[Kadampa Meditation Center](#) (New Kadampa tradition, Tibetan Buddhism)

[Lihn Son Detroit Sacred Mountain Monastery](#) (Vietnamese Buddhism)

[Midwest Buddhist Meditation Center](#), Watbuddha Vihara Michigan (Thai Buddhist tradition)

[Muddy Water Zen](#) (Taego Korean tradition)

[Mumunsa Zen Center](#) (Jogye Zen Korean tradition)

[Still Point Zen Buddhist Temple](#) (Jogye Zen Korean tradition)

[Theravada Buddhist Association Michigan](#) (Theravada, Myanmar)

[Triple Crane Retreat Center](#) (Huayan tradition, Taiwan)
[Tu vien Linh Phong](#) (Vietnamese Buddhist Association of Detroit)
[Windsor Buddhist Vihara](#) (Theravada tradition, Sri Lanka)
[Zen Buddhist Temple-Ann Arbor](#) (Korean Zen tradition)

Cultural Organizations

[Ann Arbor Public Library AAPI Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#), Ann Arbor
[Asian-Indian Women's Association](#), Detroit
[Association of Chinese Americans](#), Detroit
[Association of Korean-American Professionals in the Automotive Industry](#), Southeast Michigan
[Bhutanese Community of Michigan](#), Grand Rapids
[Chinese Association of Greater Detroit](#)
[Council of Asian Pacific Americans](#), Michigan
[Detroit Asian Youth](#)
[Detroit Chinese Business Association](#)
[Detroit Chinese Engineers Association](#)
[Great Lakes Hmong Association](#)
[Japan America Society of Michigan and Southwestern Ontario](#)
[Japan Business Society of Detroit](#)
[Japan Cultural Development](#), Michigan
[Japan Society of Detroit Women's Club](#)
[Japanese American Citizen League](#), Detroit
[Japanese Cultural Center, Tea House, and Gardens](#), Saginaw
[Korean American Cultural Center of Michigan](#)
[Michigan Chinese Women Association](#)
[Michigan Taiwanese American Organization](#)
[Nepalese Association of Michigan](#)
[Nepali Sahitya Manch USA](#), Grand Rapids
[Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce of Greater Detroit](#)
[Thai-American Association of Michigan](#)
[Vietnamese American Association of Michigan](#)
[Vietnamese American Community of West Michigan](#)
[Western Michigan Asian American Association](#)

Academic Organizations

[University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies](#)
[University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies](#)
[University of Michigan Center for South Asian Studies](#)
[Center for Southeast Asian Studies](#)
[University of Michigan Buddhist Studies](#)

[UM-Dearborn Center for Ethnic and Religious Studies](#)

[Michigan State University Asian Studies Center](#)

[University of Toledo Asian Studies Institute](#)

[Wayne State University Asian Studies](#)